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of the spectre nun, revealed the whole story to him, under a solemn promise of secrecy. "Nothing more than that, brother?" exclaimed the old soldier, "You shall soon be relieved. Follow me to my quarters." Fritz followed, wondering. His comrade drew a circle in his tent, traced mysterious characters within it, and stepping in with Fritz, began his conjuration. Soon a dark room appeared, with a gloomy light from a magic lamp, and in the midst of it appeared the spectre nun! The old soldier forthwith commanded her to confine her operations to a little brook meadow in a distant valley, and never to leave it this side of the day of doom. The spectre vanished.

Drawing a long breath of relief, Fritz watched the disappearance of the magic sight, rejoicing from the bottom of his heart that he was at last well rid of the tormenting ghost.

It was too late to return to Laurenstein; the armies were again in motion, and he must follow Wallenstein to the field. The course of war led him into distant countries, and three years passed before he could return to Bohemia. He had borne himself bravely in many a hard encounter, and had risen to the rank of Colonel. All this time he had not heard from Emilie. Perhaps he fancied he had forgot her. But on seeing the towers of Laurenstein in the distance, his old love came flashing back into his heart and face; and now the question was, had she forgotten him? He could not rest till he knew. Without giving his name, he gained entrance to the castle as an old family friend, just returned from the wars. The story need not be interrupted to describe Emilie's startled confusion when her lover appeared. Joy mantled her pale cheek, mixed with a sense of wrong done to her, of indignation and perplexity. She greeted him with coolness in her manner, which it cost her eyes a hard struggle not to undo. For more than three years she had been resolving to forget him, and yet ever keeping him in mind. His image was always fresh in her heart. The god of dreams seemed to take his part, for numberless were the visions she had of him, and, what was singular, every one was a vindication of him.

Colonel Fritz, (as we must call him now,) whose stately bearing was not without its effect on the keen glances of the mother, soon found an opportunity to talk with Emilie in private. He related the misadventure of the elopement night, and

she confessed the unhappy suspicions that had wounded her heart. The lovers made up with kisses and fresh vows, and concluded to extend their secret so as to let mamma into the circle. The good dame was no less astonished by the love-affair of the timid Emilie, than by the spectral facts of the attempted runaway, but concluded that love, after such hard proofs, deserved its own reward, she only objected to her lover, that he had no family nor name. She had nothing to say, however, to Emilie's answer, that it was more reasonable to marry a man without a name, than a name without a man; and no prince or count forthcoming, she at length gave her consent. "Fair Fritz" embraced his charming bride; the marriage passed off with little splendor but much happiness, and without any claim being made upon the bridegroom by the Spectre Nun.—*Boston Journal.*

## LETTER FROM ITALY.

### A HOLY FETE.

WE have before us a letter, written originally for a Philadelphia paper, which, though not relating to Art, is yet so highly descriptive of other things to be seen, in this day of novelties, in the country of art-shrines and art-treasures, that we are induced to lay it before our readers, to tell its own story:

FLORENCE, April 4, 1858.—I have just returned from Prato, where I have seen the most astonishing performance which probably this nineteenth century of advancement and enlightenment can show to any one. To begin at the beginning, Prato is an ancient walled town of twelve thousand souls, on the line of the Maria Antonia railway, and eleven miles from Florence; here every three years, on Good Friday at least, twenty thousand good and bad Catholics, and about all the indifferent Protestants sojourning and traveling in Tuscany, go to see "La processione del Cristo Redentore," which is in fact the funeral of Christ the Redeemer, as the priests think it ought to have been, and not as it was. We, that is another indifferent Protestant, and myself, went to the station in time for the five o'clock train; found the gates shut and some thousand

of the washed and unwashed outside waiting to get in, and (as railway carriages here are not like ours, of India-rubber, and made to contain an indefinite number,) having rather a hopeless time of it. The legitimate quantity for the train were already inside, engaged in admiring the struggles of a very small engine with a mile or two of empty cars, and smiling compassionately at the efforts of the crowd waiting admittance. We, however, with prophetic eye, had foreseen the difficulty, and provided ourselves with tickets the day before; on showing them to the bearded warrior in waiting, he opened the gates and we passed in, to the utter dismay of those we left behind. The little engine finally succeeding in its efforts, off we went at a very moderate pace indeed.

We had picked up a friend, the son of a Signore Thomas, an English director of the road, who, as you will see, was a great comfort to us, and proved himself a man of might and authority, though he stood but five feet two in his high-heeled boots. In our carriage were three specimens of the *Civis Britannicus*: a male and two females; the former in the usual sack-cloth suit worn by this species when traveling, the latter in flat hats, standing shirt collars, many ringlets, confined by the obsolete side-combs, high-lows (very stout) and one petticoat of a carnation hue. We being dark and bearded men, they took us for aborigines, understanding alone our own vernacular, and therefore conversed together with much freedom on the discomfort of Tuscany in general, the infamy of priests, the fleas, and "how those Italian men smelt of garlic," all, you perceive, strictly national subjects. We had spoken the lingua Toscana to help the delusion, but the last remark was too much for the offspring of the Signore Tommaso, who immediately exclaimed, "Cheesy idea, that, George!" This exclamation carried utter confusion into their cockney bosoms, and their embarrassment was most refreshing to look upon. They tried to conciliate by an offer of John Murray, but we refused to be appeased, until the sack-cloth suit produced the pipe of peace, whereat we thawed, and smoked, and the side combs took just a trifle of snuff (having had the grippe), and we all talked and made merry, and found, as is often the case, that there were very good oysters in very ugly shells; and they found we did speak English, and didn't eat garlic, and

so we steamed into Prato in unanimity and fraternal accord.

Now the force of character of the young Tommaso began to be felt. He pushed resolutely to the gate, which was guarded by men with cocked hats and drawn swords, who unjustly insisted on seeing every one's ticket, thereby causing great delay and discomfort, and he spoke at once to the very largest of the men, and said, "*Io son il figlio del Signore Tommaso*," and much more, which, translated, meant, "I am the son of the Signore Tommaso, and if you don't let me and these two fellows through without all this bother, why you'll catch it from my governor to-morrow, that's all." The face of the large soldier covered itself with reverence, his hand touched his cocked hat, and he said, "Oh, pass, signore; pass at once," which we did, the outsiders murmuring, not with disgust, but with admiration, and thinking the signore a Prince in plain clothes, and we his gentlemen in waiting. We rushed to the nearest tavern, or cafe, as the natives call it, whence we sent a willing youth to secure us a window, during whose absence we drank poncini bianchi, a vile compound in vogue here, composed of bad sugar, worse rum and hot water, and which costs two cents a tumbler. The willing youth presently returning, piloted us through a dense and dirty crowd to our window, overlooking the chief piazza, and directly opposite the grand old church, whence the procession starts. The place, as well as all the city, was superbly illuminated, and crowded with centurions, Roman infantry, modern Tuscan soldiers, and thousands of people, almost all contadini, with their wives and sweethearts. A fine military band was playing, and the noise was deafening, all the surrounding houses were hung with crimson cloths, and a loggia was erected in front of the royal library, where was the Grand Duke in all his glory, likewise his hen and chickens. Presently eight o'clock sounded from the neighboring campanile, and the ceremonies began.

First came twelve stout Tuscan soldiers, shoulder to shoulder, remorselessly pushing aside the crowd, to make way for the procession; the people fell back and became quiet; then two men in black, with cocked hats and swords, mounted on black horses, and waving white handkerchiefs; this was the signal for silence. Now followed a long array of Roman cavalry, richly clad, their velvet cloaks

falling over their horses, nearly to the ground; then the banners with the four famous letters, S. P. Q. R., surmounted by the eagles, and then five companies of foot soldiers, with their broad shields, helmets, short swords and spears. Next, Pontius Pilate on a white charger, that caused him great uneasiness; he was clothed in armor, inlaid with gold; from his shoulders hung a crimson velvet mantle, embroidered in stars, and on his head a superb casque, with fine white plume. His beard was red and luxuriant, and he was an excellent representation of the great captain in a deadly drunk. Now came many lictors, with their heads bound with green wreaths, and in their hands the fasces, which we read of, but seldom see; and then, Queen of my soul! the band of the *gendarmerie* playing such a death march! oh! so sweet, so sad! and we and the tens of thousands around us began to feel solemn and quiet. After these came a train of Carthusian monks, in their long brown cloaks, their dirty feet, in sandal shoon, and their shaved polls glistening in the light of the six feet of tallow and tow, which each one carried in his hand. Then an interval. All uncovered their heads, the silence deepened, and a gigantic monk appeared; a long white beard fell to his very girdle (a rope), from which hung a string of large black beads and a human skull, and in his strong arms he bore a tall black cross; another interval; and then rank after rank of priests in mourning garments, carrying candles and swinging censers, from which rose clouds of sweet sickening incense; in the centre of each rank was a little boy bearing one of the symbols of the Passion and the Crucifixion. The cups, the staves, the pieces of silver, the cock that crew when Peter denied his Master, the handkerchief with the impression of His face upon it, the sponge, the hyssop, the spear, the nail, &c., and lastly, the crown of thorns. A chorus of boys followed, chanting the Miserere, and then more priests, with more candles and high banners, on each of which, embroidered in gold, were some of Christ's last words on the cross; then the band of the Vellite regiment—the best in Tuscany—playing some of Beethoven's sad music, in a way to wring tears from a deaf man. I began to feel very badly.

A long, long interval, the sorrowful wail of the music came fainter and fainter still; down on their knees, on the bare

stones, was every man, woman, and child of all that multitude.

The silence was deadly; no sound but an occasional sob broke the intense stillness. Then from the church-door there came a flood of light which paled the lamps and candles around, and the very moon above; and the upturned faces of the crowd shone in that tremendous glare. It was the bier, surrounded by thousands of torches, and borne on the shoulders of tall priests. Over all was a gorgeous purple velvet canopy, loaded with gold lace and fringe. That extraordinary bed of death was covered with fine white linen, perfumed with fragrant herbs, and on it—oh! sickening sight!—lay the naked body of a man, clumsily cut in wood, shining with fresh paint and varnish; as unreal and undeathlike as carpenters and painters could make it. It passed, and the thousands gave one long, simultaneous sigh, like mourners when they leave a grave. Then a solid mass of monks bearing torches; then a superb chorus, singing the Stabat Mater—the pure boyish voices in the soprano, rising high above the deep bass of the men, in accents full of suffering and sorrow. What was popularly supposed to be a correct representation of the Mater Dolorosa, now passed, borne aloft by twelve men. She was very like a fine lady, and very unlike a mourning mother, being clad in black velvet with a train, her hair in double bandeaux, and a long veil fixed in the back of her head by a very gorgeous comb. On her bosom (worthy of Mrs. Merdle) glistened a silver affair like the ace of hearts, having taken unto itself wings and ready to fly away at a moment's warning. The motion of her bearers, in walking, gave her a constant little movement, called, I believe, by young ladies, "teetering," and which, moreover, some of them think rather elegant, but which looks to me as if they were ill at ease.

The Virgin dispelled our gloomy feelings immensely, and we felt rather inclined to be jocose on the Roman cavalry and Tuscan infantry, that finished the train. The people closed in on it as the Red sea did on Pharaoh; everybody laughed and talked immoderately, and the immediate consumption of poncini at the cafes was wonderful to behold. Yet no one got intoxicated, or was too hilarious; there was no fighting, and not much swearing. What lambs they are, to be sure—though the number of wolves with fixed bayonets

has a good deal to do with it. We got back to the station with much success, owing to our young man in authority; ranks of mounted *gens d'armes* opened before the son of Signor Tommaso; ticket-men refused coin for their paste-boards; and conductors, cap in hand, showed us to the coupe of the first class, where we industriously slept until we were awakened by "Firenze, Signori."

### AN ORIGINAL PAINTING BY BARON GERARD.

A Story.



GENTLEMAN writing us from St. Louis recently, called the attention of the Directory of the Association to an original painting, by the celebrated Baron Gerard, whose somewhat curious history the writer gives, together with the character of the work. We quote from the communication:

"The original picture of Pauline Bonaparte, or Princess Borghese, painted by Baron Gerard, originally belonged to Murat, her nephew, who had it some time in this country. During his stay in Florida he had some pecuniary troubles, and was obliged to authorize his steward to dispose of it by raffle. It was raffled in New Orleans about twenty years ago—the price of tickets was one hundred dollars each; Gabriel Paul, Esq., of St. Louis, purchased three, and succeeded in winning the picture. From him the undersigned purchased it about eighteen years ago. Two years afterwards he took it to London, England, and exhibited it at the Cosmorama, in Regent-street, for six months—left it in London with a friend, in whose possession it now is—having had it insured annually up to this time for the sum of one thousand pounds.

"Pauline is represented as a sleeping Psyche, attended by Cupid and a group of musical loves. Cupid is a correct likeness of herself when awake. The historical associations connected with this celebrated *chef d'œuvre* render it interesting to the connoisseur and artist, who are lost in admiration at the exquisite and refined symmetry of the figures, the contour of the limbs, the softness and delicacy of coloring,

the deep and impassioned halo thrown around the canvas, blending with art the very semblance of life; and, free from all voluptuousness, reclining in innocent repose."

This picture, we are informed, is to be sold before the 24th of June, in London. Any of our art lovers feeling an interest in the matter, can learn more by application to the office of the Association. We should suppose the present Monarch of the French would be eager to secure the work at any price; for Baron Gerard's portraits of the Emperor's family are not so numerous that the family of Napoleon can afford to spare them.

Speaking of Gerard recalls the following story, narrated by him of the Florentine artist, Carlo Pedrero. Its satire was the subject of much good humored remark at the time: It seems that a young Signor, of Florence, deeply enamored of a Signorina, ordered of Carlo a picture of Hymen. The god was to be attended with all the graces and joys; his torch was to be more brilliant than Cupid's. Price was of no consequence; let the artist do his best, and quickly; for the Signor would have the work done for a bridal present on the eve of his marriage with the beautiful Francesca. The painter surpassed himself, and brought the master-piece on the eve of the wedding-day. The young man was ill satisfied, finding the treatment far beneath the merit of the subject. The painter explained that his process in the use of colors was such as to need time to bring out their just effect; he would take away the picture, therefore, and bring it back some months later, when its beauty would have developed itself. The marriage took place the next day, and Carlo brought back his picture some months later. "Time has, indeed, embellished your work!" exclaimed the Florentine Signor; "what a difference! But it seems to me that the countenance of Hymen is too gay; you have given him a smiling air that does not belong to the character." "It is not my canvas but your sentiments that are changed," replied the artist; "a few months ago you were in love; now you are married." While the group of listeners were laughing at Gerard's story, which ended here, a gentleman took it up again, saying: "Do you know what happened afterward? The painter, content with the sum paid him,

now promised to represent Hymen in a way to please both lover and husband; and in a few months later he opened his atelier to the public for the exhibition of a masterpiece, promised perhaps imprudently. The public came, but they entered only a few at a time. The picture was hung quite at the end of a long gallery. The effect of colors was managed with an art that made the portrait of Hymen appear charming to those who *looked at it from a distance*, but, close to it, *it was not at all the same thing*." The expression and manner of the speaker added greatly to the humor of this epilogue. But what lends it its chief interest, and will excite the surprise of many, is to learn that its author was the learned Humboldt.

### ART-DESECRATION OF THE CAPITOL.



IN the December *Journal* we referred to the ornamentation of the Capitol at Washington in highly complimentary terms, saying: "The aid of the best engineers, the best architects, the best builders, has not only been called into requisition, but our best sculptors, painters and designers have contributed, in their various departments, the most characteristic of their works." We are indeed sorry to be compelled to qualify this notice, for the truer statement will disappoint, if it does not anger, every reader whose patriotism has led him to hope great things from the lavish outlay of money upon our magnificent Capitol. The general architectural design and finish of the building is all that could be wished for in beauty of proportion, in adaptation, and in its imposing effect. The sculptural ornamentation is, as a general thing, highly artistic and appropriate—the genius of the lamented Crawford, of Mr. Rogers, and of other eminent sculptors, having been enlisted in the work. All this led to the most favorable anticipations regarding the interior decorations by the hands of the artists. That these expectations are to end in mortification we fear is now a certainty, unless the Senate now in session takes the work from the hands of Capt. Meigs, and orders the laborers and designs from the large number of eminent American artists who are ready to do their